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Right-wing Education Ideology in a Welfare State Context

Supplementary material

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Right-wing Education Ideology in a Welfare State Context – supplementary material

The aim of this paper is to present and discuss the ideologies of education and policy proposals of right-wing political parties in Denmark. I focus mainly on three parties, the Danish People's Party, New Right party and the Conservative party. I document and try to conceptualize the educational ideologies and policy suggestions of these parties, and compare them with other characteristic parties on the left and in the middle of Danish politics (especially the Liberals and the Social Democrats).

I will try to answer the following questions:

- How can the educational ideologies and policy proposals of the Danish right-wing parties be described and conceptualized?
- What roles does education policy have in the broader platforms, the voter support and the background networks of the parties?
- What impact do the parties have on general education policy in Denmark?

Here I present a few pieces of supplementary material that will inform my presentation at the conference.

Supplement 1: Political values of far-right parties in the Danish 2019 election

In a parliamentary democracy, general elections is an important event where parties profile their political platforms, including both the more general ideological basis and the specific ideas and demands for policy. In such party platforms, there are hierarchies between different policy fields, where for instance employment, health and security are often among the most important fields. Education tends to have a middle position in such hierarchies.

In the weeks before the general election in Denmark on June 5, 2019, I collected material on education in the party platforms. Education policies were presented on the parties' websites, in most cases in the form of relatively short texts on each policy area. School and education typically cover 2-4 themes for each party. I extracted key passages and coded them (based on a qualitative assessment of wording and content) according to political values (Rasmussen, 2019). I drew on a detailed taxonomy developed by the Danish scholar Sinne Brandt Jakobsen (Jacobsen, 2015, cf. Schwarz et al, 2010). The taxonomy contains 15 basic values, each with several more specific sub-values. In the table below, the presence of basic values in the texts is marked with X, the presence of the sub-values is marked with #. The table maps selected values and sub-values in the policy platform texts of three parties:

- SD = Social Democratic Party, won 48 seats in the 2019 election
- Con = Conservative People's Party; won 12 seats in the 2019 election
- DPP = Danish People's Party, won 16 seats in the 2019 election
- NR = New Right Party ("Nye borgerlige"); won 4 seats in the 2019 election

The Danish People's Party and the New Right party represent different versions of the extreme right in Danish politics. The Social Democrats are included as a mainstream party. Following the election, the Social Democrats formed a minority government based on an alliance with two left-wing and one social liberal party.

Selected Political Values in Education Platforms of three Danish Political Parties in the 2019 Education

Parties	SD	Con	DPP	NR
Values and sub-values				
1. Democracy		X		
2. Equality	X	X	X	
3. Freedom	X		X	X
3A. Basic democratic freedom rights			#	
3B. Freedom of choice	#		#	
3E. Private ownership				#
6. Economic sustainability	X		X	
7. Strong state				
8. Weak state		X		X
9. Welfare society	X		X	
9A. Well-functioning welfare system	#			
9B. Prioritising weakest groups	#		#	
10. Personal responsibility		X		
11. Solidarity/unity	X			
13. international outlook				
15. Patriotism /nationalism	X		X	X
16. Traditional values / morality		X		
18. Enlightenment and development	X	X	X	X
18A. A well functioning (state) school system	#	#	#	
18B. Education, research and development	#	#	#	#

The values 'freedom' (3) is supported by three of the parties and 'enlightenment and development' (18) is supported by all four parties. Freedom is understood by these parties (and in fact, most other parties) as a matter of free choice. In some of the parties, the right to choose a free or private school is an example of this. It is remarkable that the parties across the political spectrum support free choice, and that only a few of them incorporate other understandings of freedom in the context of education. It is noticeable that the value 'democracy' is mentioned explicitly only in the platform of the Conservatives.

In Frederiksen's taxonomy, the value 'enlightenment and development' (18) is strongly linked to education and knowledge development. However, the sub-values show some differences. The New Right does not share the desire for a well-functioning public school system (18A) because the party is in favor of a radical privatization of the Folkeskole (the public primary and lower secondary school).

'Equality' (2) is one of the most common values among Danish political parties, but it is in fact not found in the New Right platform. The value 'weak state' (8) is found in many of the party platforms, including the Conservatives and the New Right, but not in those of the Social Democrats and the Danish People's Party. This value is understood by all subscribers as a matter of limiting state bureaucracy. A frequently mentioned example is the desire to limit state control of the primary and lower secondary school, for example by making participation in the national tests voluntary. To the New Right, a weak state also means a growing private sector and a shrinking public sector.

The value 'patriotism/nationalism' (15) reflects the political discussion about refugees and immigrants. It is evident in the platforms of both SD, DPP and NR, primarily expressed as the desire to protect national culture and values). It is worth noting that the strongly contrasting value, 'international outlook' (13), is not highlighted by any of the three.

Supplement 2: New Right and schooling

The New Right is a new party, running for the first time during the 2019 elections. The main issue provoking the establishment of the party was the policy towards immigrants and refugees. In these questions, the Danish People's Party had strongly influenced the previous centre-right government in adopting a more restrictive policy, and the Social Democrats had more or less taken over this policy, hoping to capture voters from the DPP. In fact the DPP lost much ground in the election. But the New Right argued for an even more restrictive policy, criticizing of the centre-right government's initiatives in this field as being to slack and ineffective. In this way the New Right party continues the anti-immigration policy of the DPP, but in a more radical form. In other policy fields, however, the New Right is very different from the DPP. Its economic and social policies represent a radical market liberalism, calling for instance for significant reduction of the public sector and lowering of taxes.

The New Right obtained 2.3 pct. of votes in the 2019 elections, securing them four seats in parliament. According to voter surveys, most of the party's new voters came from the DPP and the Liberal Party (the biggest Danish centre-right party in recent decades). Of the New Right's voters, two thirds were men in the ages 18-49, most having vocational training and work in the private sector. In the two years since the election, voter support for the party has grown, and opinion polls indicate that it would get 9-11 pct. of votes, if an election was to be held now (Nissen & Siim, 2021).

The education policy platform of the New right in the 2019 election was strongly influenced by economic liberalism but also by anti-immigration policy. Here is a quote from the platform:

'All schools must have self-ownership. Municipalities should not run schools. The money must follow the individual student. The act on the 'Folkeskole' is to be replaced by a new short school act of a maximum of 15 pages. Detailed public school management is to be abolished and replaced by a national curriculum. The school will have total freedom to organize the teaching itself. The teacher education will be upgraded and the period of practical teacher training will be extended. All schools must be based on Danish values of democracy, equality and gender equality. Consequently, Schools based on an Islamic world-view cannot receive public funding'.

The economic liberalism is emphasized in another section of the platform, where the New Right states: *'The money must follow the child so that competition between schools can raise the quality'.*

Supplement 3: Defending Danish culture

In April 2021, the Danish People's party (DPP) published a pamphlet on issues in cultural policy, entitled 'Defend Danish Culture – a response to identity politics'. It provoked considerable debate, mainly because it claimed that humanities and social sciences are dominated by leftist researchers whose political ideas influenced the choice of theories and the research results in certain fields, not least gender research. The party called for the Minister of Higher Education and Science to investigate the field of gender studies in higher education, because the party observes '... a growing and harmful trend in this pseudoscience (...) which does not have a basis in research evidence'.

The pamphlet also contained programme statements related to the Folkeskole as well as to the 'Gymnasium,' the general upper secondary school. The party demands a stronger focus on national history and culture in the history and the literature curricula. For instance, more Danish literary classics produced before 1870 (seen as the breakthrough year for cultural modernity) must be included in the teaching. The party also demands more focus on Christianity in schools. While Christianity is a state religion in Denmark, the public school system is relatively independent of the church. Religion is a school subject, and its main topic is Christianity, but the curriculum is non-confessional and includes knowledge on other religions. The DPP demands that Christianity must constitute 80 pct. of 'Folkeskole' teaching on religion and that

Christianity must be a mandatory subject in the Gymnasium. Christianity should not be seen as one religion among others, such as Islam and Buddhism. Furthermore, different school activities should support the links between school and church; for instance choir singing of Christian hymns.

The DPP pamphlet clearly represents a national conservative school policy. Danish national history and literary classics are mobilised against the threat of globalisation, and Christianity is mobilised against the threat of immigration, especially from Islamic parts of the world. The defence against Islam is also visible in a section on food culture. The DPP demands that at least half the food served in public institutions, including pre-school and school institutions, must be Danish. Precisely what constitutes Danish food is not specified, but it is clear that serving meat prepared through Halal procedures is to be forbidden.

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